

This public information brochure is a synopsis of various research materials related to the *Site of Camp Douglas*, prepared for the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks by its staff.



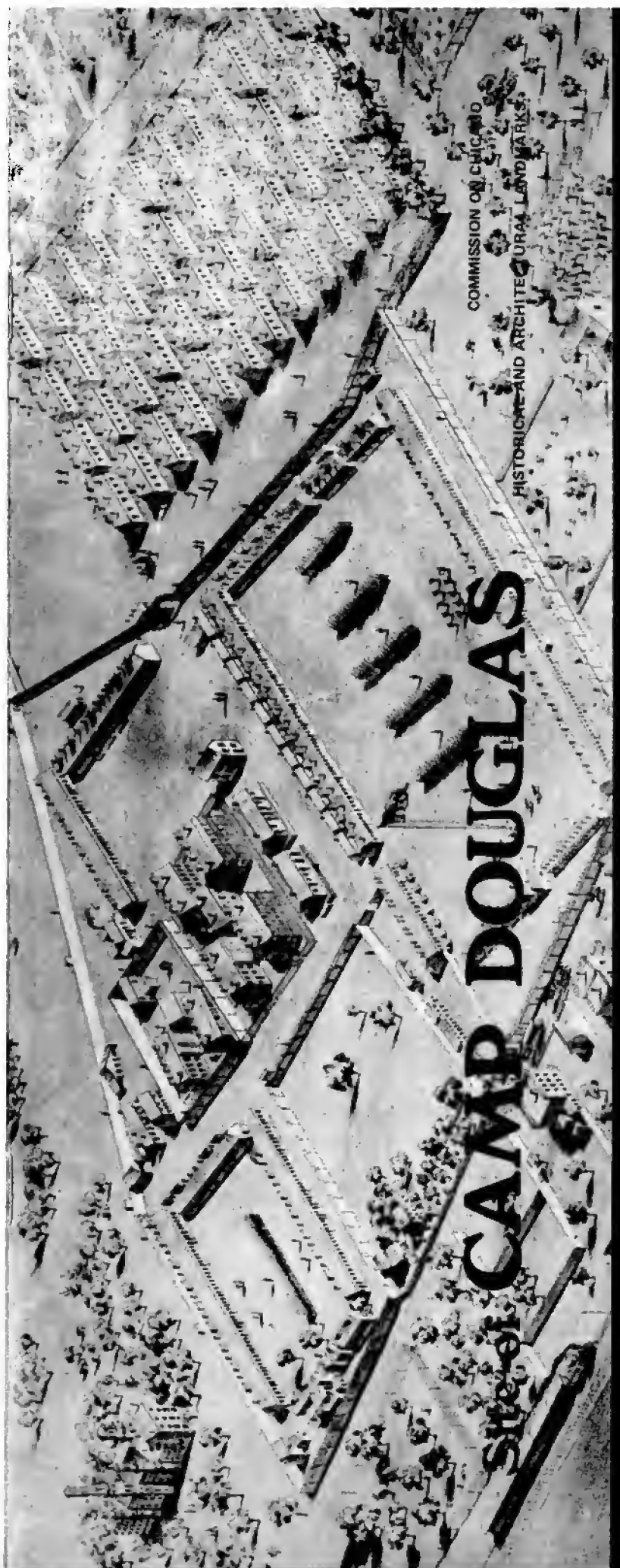
CITY OF CHICAGO  
Richard J. Daley, Mayor

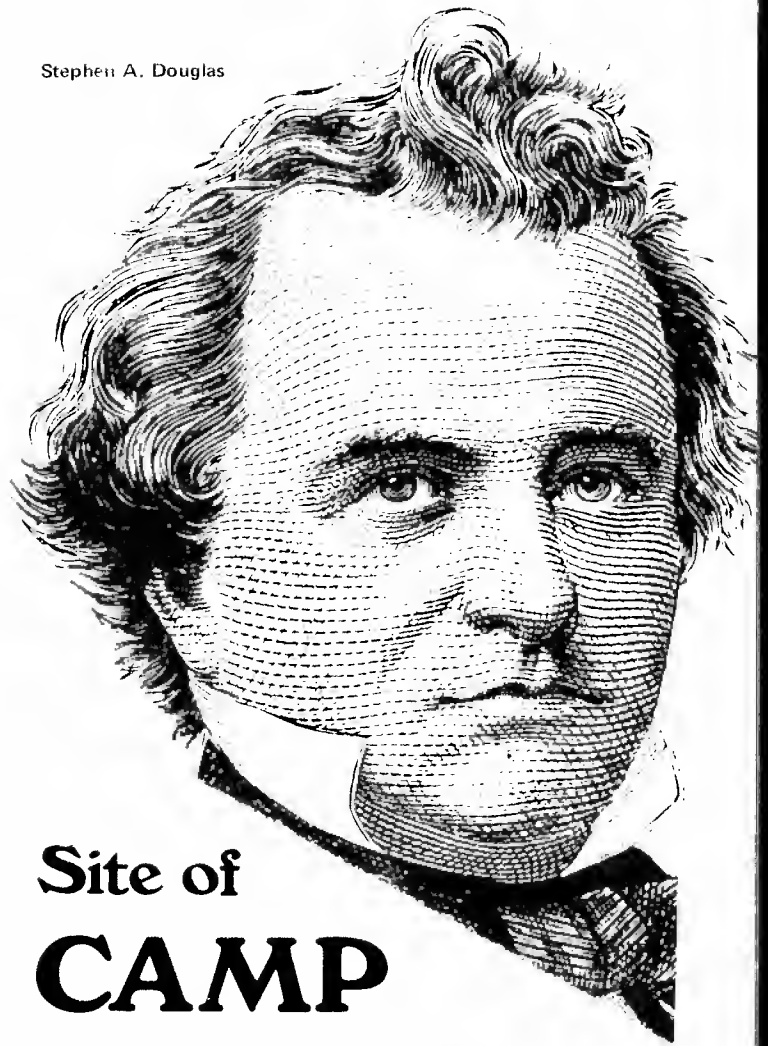
**COMMISSION ON CHICAGO HISTORICAL  
AND ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS**

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1864 drawing of Camp Douglas. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society)





## Site of **CAMP DOUGLAS**

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The overall physical appearance of Camp Douglas can generally be described as bleak. There were approximately 156 buildings on the site, most of them poorly constructed wooden barracks, and a large open area or "yard," surrounded by a twelve-foot wooden stockade fence. An irregular boundary, interrupted by two gates, enclosed the camp.

The camp was named in honor of Senator Stephen A. Douglas and situated on part of his estate, "Oakenwald." After serving as a member of the Illinois House of Representatives (1836-37), as Illinois Secretary of State (1840-

41), and as judge of the Illinois Supreme Court (1841-47), Douglas became a U. S. Senator from Illinois. In 1858, he was opposed by Abraham Lincoln for the Senate seat, and was challenged by Lincoln to the seven historic Lincoln-Douglas debates.

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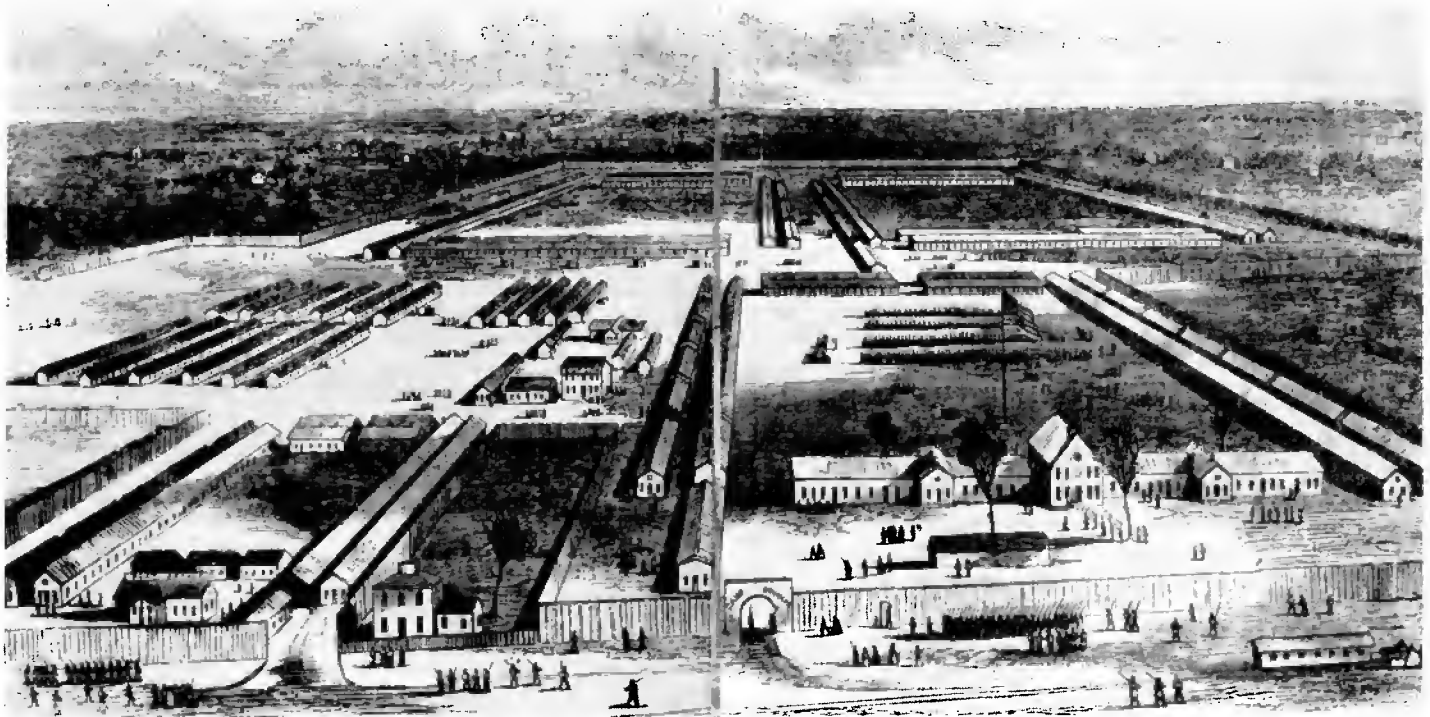
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No one at the camp was prepared to handle the large influx of prisoners. In the first months of the war, the Union had won battles and Confederate prisoners were captured, but there had been little planning as to the housing of these prisoners. Chicago's mayor, Julian S. Rumsey, complained:

There is not even a fence around the barracks and many were afraid that the prisoners would break out and attack the city. Authorities at the camp were faced with many problems, as what had been a camp of healthy and vigorous recruits was now a camp of sick and ragged prisoners. Poor planning led to poor conditions at the camp. Many of the prisoners were sick or wounded on

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Soon after its conversion to a prisoner of war camp, Camp Douglas experienced a great influx of Confederate prisoners. The photograph above shows these prisoners in the yard of the camp. Note the variations in the prisoner's uniforms and the wooden barracks in the background. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society)

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A factor which, to some extent, improved conditions at the camp was public sympathy. The camp was frequently visited by Chicagoans, many of whom were concerned over

the welfare of the prisoners. Collections were taken in churches and medicines were sent to the camp by the wagonload. A "Relief Committee of Citizens" was organized, and druggists were employed to aid the post surgeon.

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The same year, 1864, was also the year of the 'Chicago Conspiracy,' a movement designed by Southern sympathizers to free the 8,352 prisoners at Camp Douglas and start an insurrection in Illinois and Indiana and thus split the Union. A plot was uncovered in August, reinforcements were mobilized to aid the guards at the camp, and it failed.

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(Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society)





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In November, 1865, the sale of government property began. Barracks and fences in the camp were pulled down and the lumber sold. The other buildings were sold at auction to the highest bidder. A single row of barracks was moved from the site of the camp to 746-54 East 37th Street. These were demolished in 1940.

Although nothing remains of Camp Douglas today, the tomb of Senator Douglas stands, marked by an impressive monument completed in 1881, in a small park near the site of the camp. To the south of this is St. Joseph's Carondelet Child Center, a part of which was constructed in 1864 and was used as a home for sick and disabled Civil War veterans. Both are in the area of 35th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue and serve to remind Chicagoans of the role that Chicago and Camp Douglas played in the Civil War.



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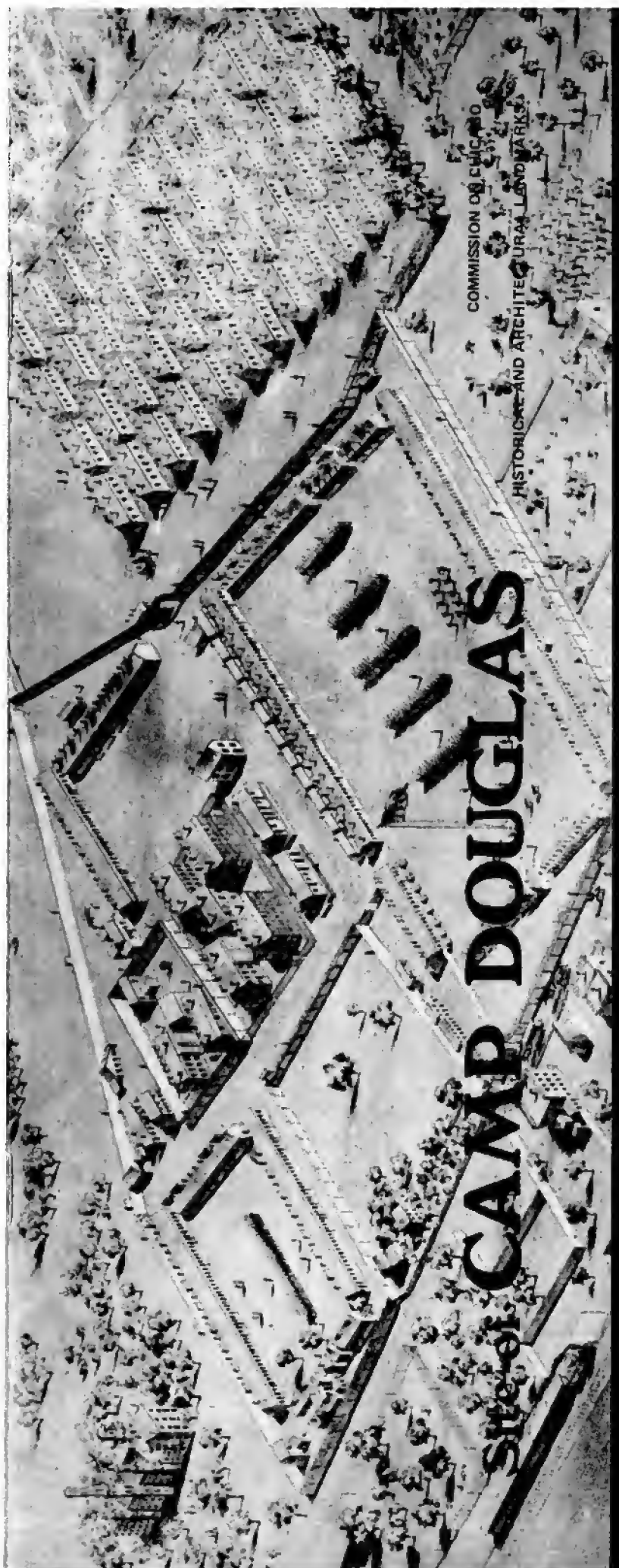
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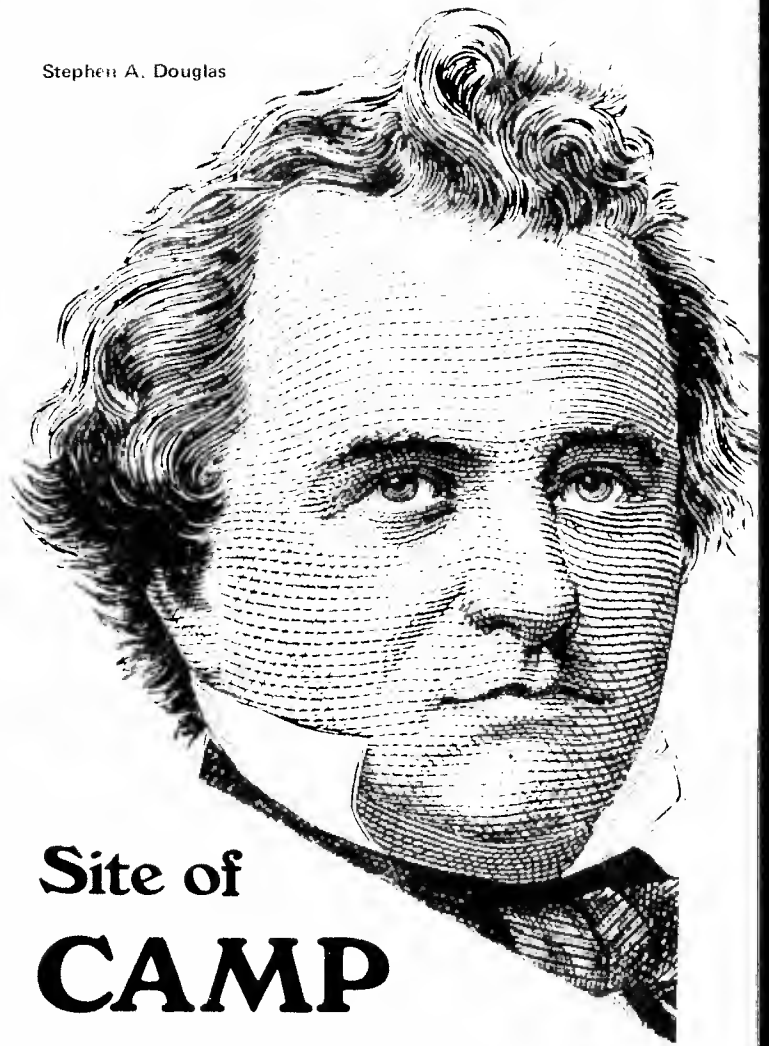
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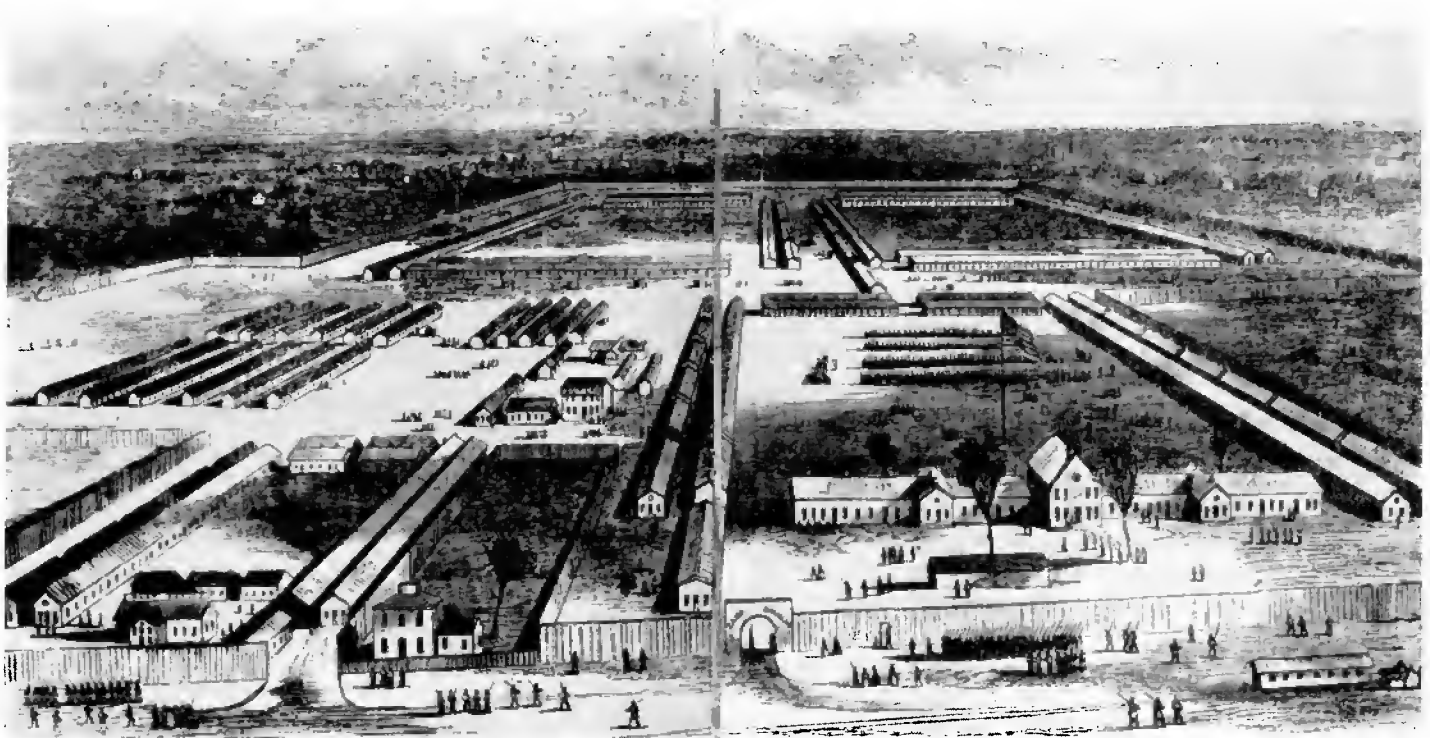
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